

APPENDIX A. NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE PLAN - 1986

1. POLICY

It is the policy of the signatory agencies to provide a national plan for coordinating search and rescue services to meet domestic needs and international commitments

2. PURPOSE

This Plan continues, by interagency agreement, the effective use of all available facilities in all types of search and rescue missions. The National Search and Rescue Plan-1981 is superseded by this Agreement.

3. DEFINITIONS

- a. Search and Rescue (SAR) is the use of available resources to assist persons and property in potential or actual distress.
- b. Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) is a unit responsible for promoting efficient organization of SAR services and coordinating conduct of SAR operations within a Search and Rescue Region.
- c. Rescue Sub-Center (RSC) is a unit subordinate to an RCC established to complement the latter within a Sector.
- d. Search and Rescue Region (SRR) is a defined area in which SAR services coordinated by a single RCC are provided.
- e. Search and Rescue Sector (SRS) is a specified area within an SRR in which SAR services coordinated by a single RSC are provided.

4. OBJECTIVE

This Agreement provides a National Search and Rescue Plan integrating into a cooperative network available United States SAR facilities which can be coordinated in any one Area by a single Federal agency. This affords greater protection of life and property and ensures greater efficiency and economy. It is not the intent for the Plan to conflict in any way with SAR responsibilities agreed to by contracting

states of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue or other appropriate international instruments to which the United States is or may become a party.

5. SCOPE

This Plan is solely intended to provide internal guidance to all signatory Federal agencies. State organizations may wish to retain established SAR responsibilities within their boundaries for incidents primarily local or intrastate in character. In such cases, appropriate agreements are made between SAR Coordinator(s) and respective State organizations.

6. PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

- a. The agencies of the Department of Transportation carry out broad responsibilities in transportation safety. The United States Coast Guard develops, establishes, maintains and operates rescue facilities for the promotion of safety on, under and over the high seas and waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. The Coast Guard also conducts safety inspections of most merchant vessels and investigations of marine casualties. The Federal Aviation Administration has air traffic control and flight service facilities available to assist in SAR operations. The Maritime Administration operates a fleet of merchant ships for government use and promotes a safe Merchant Marine
- b. Departments of Defense components provide SAR facilities for their own operations. These facilities may be used for civil needs on a not-to-interfere basis with military missions.
- c. The Department of Commerce participates in or supports SAR operations through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) which provides nautical and aeronautical charting; information on tides and tidal currents; marine environmental forecasts and warnings for the high seas, and coastal and inland waterways; and satellite

services for detecting and locating aircraft, ships or individuals in potential or actual distress.

d. The Federal Communications Commission promulgates rules and regulations for non-government use of wire and radio facilities for promoting safety of life and property, and cooperates in SAR operations through its long range direction finder network.

e. The National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) has aircraft, spacecraft and world-wide tracking data acquisition and communications networks which can assist in SAR operations. NASA supports SAR objectives through research and development or application of aerospace technology to search, rescue, survival, and recovery related equipment such as location tracking systems, transmitters, receivers, and antennas capable of locating aircraft, ships, spacecraft, or individuals in potential or actual distress.

f. Land managing components of the Department of the Interior (DOI) can provide SAR services on lands and waters administered by DOI and may assist in operations in adjacent jurisdictions. The degrees of responsibility assumed in each DOI field area depends upon the legislative and jurisdictional character of the bureau and field area. Responses range from support of law enforcement authorities or other local units to primary SAR coordination and execution. Similarly, components assume varying degrees of responsibility for preventative measures to protect the visiting public.

g. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) establishes Federal policies for, and coordination of, all civil defense and civil emergency planning, management, mitigation and assistance functions of executive agencies. FEMA assists State and local governments in coordinating civil emergency preparedness, response and civil recovery activities, and develops and operates telecommunication, warning and electronic systems for civil emergency assistance FEMA supports SAR activities within this framework.

h. Certain State and local governments and civil organizations have facilities which contribute to the effectiveness of the over-all SAR network.

7. THE PLAN

a. *Coordination of Agencies*

The Interagency Committee on Search and Rescue, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders, coordinates implementation of the Plan. It reviews SAR matters affecting more than one agency, including recommendations of participating agencies for revision or amendment of the Plan, and makes appropriate recommendations. It encourage Federal, State, local and private agencies to develop equipment and procedures to enhance national SAR capability, and promotes coordinated development of all national SAR resources.

b. *SAR Areas*

To help assign United States SAR coordination responsibilities, three SAR Areas are identified. Federal agencies are assigned overall responsibility for coordinating SAR within each Area. The Inland and Maritime Areas include aeronautical and maritime SRRs for which the United States has primary SAR coordination responsibility. These SRRs are established in coordination with the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization. The Overseas Area helps provide for SAR interests beyond the limits of the Inland and Maritime Areas, and does not generally include internationally recognized SRRs for which the United States is primarily responsible. SAR Areas are as follows:

(1) **Inland Area** Continental United States, except Alaska, and waters under the jurisdiction of the United States.

(2) **Maritime** Waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States; Hawaii; portions of Alaska south of 58 degrees north latitude and east of 141 degrees west longitude; and the high seas and those commonwealths, territories, and possessions of the United States lying within the "Maritime Area" as designated on the attached chart. The Maritime Area has two parts, the Atlantic Area and the Pacific Area.

(3) **Overseas Area** The inland area of Alaska and all other portions of the globe not included within the Inland Area or Maritime Area.

c. Area SAR Coordinators

(1) The Federal agencies named below are the designated SAR Coordinators for the various SAR Areas:

Inland Area United States Air Force

Maritime United States Coast Guard

Overseas Area Appropriate overseas unified command or Alaskan Air Command

(2) An Area SAR Coordinator may subdivide the Area for the advantageous execution of this Plan and designate an appropriate officer as SAR Coordinator for each subdivision or combination of subdivisions as appropriate. Each subdivision will be served by an RCC, and its boundaries should coincide with pertinent international SRR boundaries. Where this is impossible or impracticable, changes to international boundaries should be proposed to the appropriate international organization through proper channels by the agency primarily concerned. Similarly, an Area SAR Coordinator may establish Sectors, each with an associated RSC. A SAR Coordinator for an SRR is usually also the SAR Coordinator for any Sector within the SRR.

(3) It is not intended that SAR Coordinators have primary responsibility for SAR in foreign territory or areas of the high seas which have not been accepted by the United States for international SAR responsibility. However, it is intended that an appropriate SAR Coordinator or designated subordinate act as the United States official for overseeing coordination of all United States SAR interests in such areas.

d. SAR Network

(1) SAR Coordinators should, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders, organize existing agencies and their facilities through suitable agreements into a basic network to (a) assist military and non-military persons and property in potential distress or actual distress, and (b) carry out SAR

obligations under international instruments to which the United States is a party.

(2) Agreements between a SAR Coordinator and the Army, Navy, Air Force, JCS Unified Command, or Coast Guard should provide for the fullest practicable use of facilities of such agencies in SAR mission under the SAR Coordinator, consistent with statutory responsibilities and authorities and assigned agency functions, and delegation of authority by such agencies to the SAR Coordinator for coordination of their facilities committed to such missions.

(3) Agreements between a SAR Coordinator and civil agencies of the Federal Government should provide for the fullest practicable cooperation of such agencies in SAR missions under the SAR Coordinator, consistent with statutory responsibilities and authorities and assigned agency functions, and for such coordination by the SAR Coordinator of their facilities committed to such missions as may be necessary and practicable.

(4) Agreements between a SAR Coordinator and State, local, and private agencies should provide for the fullest practicable cooperation of such agencies in SAR missions under a SAR Coordinator, consistent with the willingness and ability of such agencies to engage in SAR, and for such coordination by the SAR Coordinator of their facilities committed to such missions as may be necessary and practicable.

(5) Each SAR Coordinator should maintain files of such agreements, and lists of such agencies and of the locations of their SAR facilities.

e. SAR Operations

(1) SAR Coordinators should develop plans and procedures for effective use of all available SAR facilities within their SSRs, and to carry out the objectives of this Plan if military forces are withdrawn because of a military emergency or change in military missions.

(2) SAR Coordinators may be assisted by, or may request assistance from, interested Federal agencies having SAR capabilities.

(3) RCCs having international responsibilities conform to SAR procedures established as standard or requirements by international conventions to which the United States is a party, unless differences or reservations have been filed by the United States.

(4) SAR Coordinators should, through an appropriate RCC, coordinate and, as appropriate, direct operations of SAR facilities committed to any SAR mission, consistent with the provisions of this Plan, and plans of the Area SAR Coordinator.

(5) On scene coordination and direction may be delegated to any appropriate unit participating in a particular incident under the cognizance of the SAR Coordinator.

(6) SAR Coordinators of adjacent subdivisions of the same or different SAR Areas should maintain liaison with the support each other in SAR operations as appropriate.

(7) SAR Coordinators should maintain liaison and cooperate with SAR forces of other nations as appropriate and feasible.

f. General Provisions

(1) SAR Coordinators should encourage development and maintenance of proficiency in SAR techniques and procedures by participating agencies and assist as appropriate.

(2) SAR Coordinators should encourage the continued development of State and local SAR facilities as appropriate.

(3) Boundaries of SAR Areas or Area subdivisions established by or under this Plan are not to be construed as barriers to effective SAR operations, initiative or judgment.

(4) No provision of this Plan or any supporting plan is to be construed as an obstruction to prompt and

effective action by any agency or individual to relieve distress whenever and wherever found.

Date: June 21, 1986
For the Department of Commerce

(5) No provisions of this Plan or any supporting plan are to be construed in such a way as to contravene responsibilities and authorities of any participating agency as defined by statutes, executive orders or international agreements, or established responsibilities of other agencies and organizations which regularly assist persons and property in distress resulting from incidents of a local nature.

Signature: Ann McLaughlin
Title: Acting Secretary of Interior
Date: September 15, 1986
For the Department of the Interior

(6) This Plan does not encompass SAR for salvage operations.

Signature: James C. Fletcher
Title: Administrator
Date: October 16, 1986
For the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

(7) This Plan does not encompass SAR for such activities as military undersea rescue, special or unusual operations of the Armed Forces, rescue of persons or property in outer space, emergencies affecting the public welfare resulting from enemy attack, insurrections, civil disasters or equivalent disasters or equivalent emergencies which endanger life and property or disrupt the usual process of government. However, the SAR organization and its facilities should be used to the maximum extent feasible in connection with these activities.

Signature: Mark S. Fowler
Title: Chairman
Date: June 13, 1986
For the Federal Communications Commission

(8) Although Federal leadership in SAR is generally recognized, the Federal Government does not compel State, local or private agencies to conform to a national SAR plan. The desires of State and local agencies to direct and control their own facilities in SAR missions resulting from intra-State or local activities within their boundaries is respected. Cooperation should be pursued through liaison and agreements.

Signature: Julius W. Bectons
Title: Director
Date: September 11, 1986
For the Federal Emergency Management Agency

Signature: Elizabeth Hanford Dole
Title: Secretary of Transportation
Date: September 11, 1986
For the Department of Transportation

Signature: E. C. Aldridge, Jr.
Title: Secretary of the Air Force
Date: June 26, 1986
For the Department of Defense

Signature: Malcolm Baldrige
Title: Secretary of Commerce